

## THAT BUSINESS LEAGUE.

Its Second Annual Meeting and the men Who Attended it—The Program—The People and the Sections Represented by the Great Gathering—Eloquence and flights of Oratory—A pen picture by Robert W. Taylor,

Chicago, Ill., Special—The second convention of the National Negro Business League has just closed and its proceedings add an inspiring chapter to the history of the American Negro. At this convention Massachusetts shook hands with California and Illinois and Wisconsin promenaded with Louisiana and Florida.

Nearly two hundred delegates were present, representing nearly every walk of life from the small storekeeper to the wholesale merchant; from the artisan to the inventor and manufacturer; from the truck-gardener to the planter, and from the teacher, doctor and lawyer to the ripe scholar, skilled surgeon and diplomat.

The convention extended through three days, (August 21, 22, 23) and no time was lost in vain babbling, parliamentary wrangles and petty squabbles. "I am here for business" was the expression on the face of every delegate



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and from the beginning to the end the all-absorbing topic, "what is your business?" "What, your trials and triumphs in the running thereof?" Around these questions hung about all the experience given and the discussions provoked.

The convention was called to order at ten o'clock on the morning of Aug. 21 by President Booker T. Washington, who called on Rev. J. W. E. Bowen of Atlanta, Ga., to make the opening prayer. Addresses of welcome were then delivered by Mr. Fieldhouse on behalf of Governor Yates, who could not be present, and City Attorney Taylor, the representative of Mayor Carter Harrison who was out of the city.

The address of the latter was a masterpiece of eloquence. Mr. W. J. Taylor, one of Chicago's leading Negro pharmacists, welcomed the delegates on behalf of the local leagues, and his words were timely and well received.

Following this, President Booker T. Washington stepped forward to deliver his annual address amidst the greatest demonstration. He spoke briefly but his sound advice, downright earnestness and rugged eloquence set the convention on fire. "Let no legislation or attempted legislation," said he, "dishearten or discourage us. Every step must be forward. The opinion of the

world is not influenced permanently by what we say of ourselves, nor by what others say of us, but by what we do."

After the president concluded his address, and committees on (a) Credentials and (b) Resolutions and Organization were appointed, Giles B. Jackson, Richmond, Va., was introduced, who addressed the convention on "The Business League of Virginia."

He told of the part the league played in getting Prof. Booker T. Washington before the Virginia legislature and the influence of Prof. Washington's speech in changing the sentiment of the white people regarding the separation of the public school funds of Virginia. He also cited statistics showing what a potent factor the Negro is socially and economically, in Virginia. According to his statement the Negroes pay taxes on \$17,000,000 worth of real-estate in Virginia.

The next speaker was from Richmond, also. Rev. W. L. Taylor, President, True Reformers. He spoke on "Business Features of the Order of True Reformers." No speaker during the three day's session of the convention was more heartily received. He told how the Order was started twenty years ago with one hundred members and the methods employed to increase the membership to forty two thousand, eight hundred and seventy two, the present enrollment.

In twenty years the Order has paid \$1,500,000 sick benefits and nearly \$1,000,000 of death benefits. A report of each department of the Order was given, viz; The Grand Fountain, The Rosebud Fountain, Real Estate department, Journalism, Old Folk's Home and the Bank. No one could listen to Dr. Taylor's report without feeling that the organization of which he is the head is a thoroughly business-like institution and that sentiment has not one iota of weight in its affairs. "We take nothing for granted," said he, "At the end of each week we have an expert accountant to examine the books of the bank to see if his report will tally with that of the cashier and if both, the cashier and expert accountant say that there is so much money in the bank, we are not satisfied until it is counted."

Mr. J. A. Wilson of Kansas City, Mo., was next called on and he told how the business men of Kansas City, Mo., and Kansas City, Kan., are drawing trade by serving ice-water and refreshments occasionally, free. About one third of the population of Kansas City, Mo., is colored and the report of their progress was encouraging.

Dr D. P. Robinson of Lexington, Ky., also gave a good report of the colored people of his town. He said the relation existing between the races there is very amicable.

The morning session was closed with an address by T. W. Jones, Chicago, Ill., on "Can the Negro succeed as a Business man?" There is no better answer to this question than Mr. Jones, himself. Mr. Jones is a furniture mover and in a few years he has accumulated a snug fortune by reason of his business acumen. His business is the largest of its kind in this great city. It is needless to state that his paper was warmly received.

The first speaker at the evening session of the first day was Mrs. Albret Moore-Smith, Chicago, Ill., on "Negro Women's Business Clubs a Factor in the Vexed Problem."

The first and oldest Negro Women's Business club in this country is the Chicago club of which Mrs. Smith is president. She said: "That there are

five avenues of employment open to white women to every two for colored women and one of the missions of the Chicago club is to secure work for colored women in keeping with their training. Last year this club put seventeen colored women in good positions and secured situations for fifty." The paper by Mrs. Smith showed careful preparation. It was full of practical suggestions, couched in elegant English.

At this junction resolutions were read and adopted, requiring each member of the League to pay two dollars annually or twenty-five dollars for life membership. Several became life members among whom were Hon. Simon W. King, a white man of this city and Hon. M. W. Gibbs, United States Consul to Madagascar. Judge Gibbs was introduced to the convention and he made a happy impression. He is supposed to be worth seventy-five thousand dollars.

Following Judge Gibbs came Mr. Charles Banks, Clarksdale, Miss., who spoke on "Merchandising." Mr. Banks is a young man, still in his twenties, but has unusual business capacity for a man of his years. He started in business in 1889, with a capital of fifty-six dollars, and to-day is doing a business of more than twenty thousand dollars annually. It is said that he is the wealthiest Negro in his section.

Besides the income from his department store he handles cotton. From the sale of this staple last year he realized several thousand dollars. It may also be interesting to state that of the three hundred supervisors of the Census in 1900 only two were colored and Mr. Banks was one of the two. In his districts there were ninety-six enumerators, sixty-three of whom were colored.

Mr. Bank's address was an ideal business talk. He went straight to the heart of his subject and quite when he was through. Of course he was thunderously applauded.

The remainder of the evening was given up to the hearing of Negro Business Enterprises in Atlanta, Ga., Pensacola, Fla., and Mobile, Ala. Mr. W. O. Murphy told what the forty thousand Negroes of Atlanta, Ga., are doing to make themselves felt in the commercial world, and Hon. M. M. Lewy, Editor and Proprietor of the Florida Sentinel, gave a faithful and creditable report of the business Negroes of Pensacola, Fla. His statement concerning the circulation of the Florida Sentinel and the unprecedented sale of his mid-winter edition made some of the other journalists present open their eyes. Mr. Lewy is a grand-marshal of Negro Journalism and Pensacola may congratulate itself on having such a man as one of its citizens.

Mr. A. N. Johnson, Editor and Proprietor of the Mobile (Ala.) Express, gave a glowing account of the progress the colored people are making in Mobile, Ala., along business lines. His report was the most comprehensive of any given; but space will not allow me to go into particulars.

Thursday, August 23 there was only one session—(morning) a banquet having been tendered the officers and delegates of the League that evening.

The following papers were read and discussed: The Drug Business, Dr. W. S. Steers, Decatur, Ala., Undertaking, Mr. Russell, St. Louis, Mo., Merchant Tailoring, L. G. Wheeler, Chicago, Ill., Colored Business Women of the East, Mrs. D. A. Millar, Brooklyn, N. Y., Dressmaking and Millinery, Mrs. C. Taylor, Chicago, Ill., The Negro Publishing House, R. H. Boyd, Nashville,

(Continued on page 3.)

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